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WE CLAIM:

1. A guard for a crop collecting apparatus, the guard comprising:

a substantially straight elongate member having tapered ends, each end having at least one mounting orifice formed therein; wherein the elongate member is coiled in an arcing configuration when mounted and returns to a substantially straight configuration when removed.
2. A guard according to claim 1, wherein the guard is adapted for mounting under tension.
3. A guard according to claim 1, wherein the mounting orifice has a countersunk portion.
4. A guard according to claim 1, wherein the guard comprises a polyethylene member.
5. A guard according to claim 4, wherein the polyethylene member comprises ultraviolet resistant stabilizers.
6. A guard according to claim 1, wherein the elongate member includes a plurality of mounting orifices.
7. A method of mounting a guard member to a head of a crop collecting apparatus, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a substantially straight elongate guard member having mounting means at a first end and a second end;

mounting the first end to the crop collecting apparatus;

coiling the guard member in an arcuate configuration around a portion of the head;

mounting the second end to the crop collecting apparatus.

8. A mounting method according to claim 7, wherein the guard member is mounted under tension.

9. A mounting method according to claim 8, wherein the mounting means comprise ends with orifices formed therein.

10. A crop collection apparatus, comprising;

a frame;

wheels mounted to the frame;

a pick up head supported on the frame and having a rotatable reel;

a plurality of tines mounted to the reel;

a housing extending around the reel, including a plurality of guards, wherein the guards are intermediate adjacent tines and alternate with the tines, and wherein the guards comprise substantially straight elongate members.

11. A crop collection apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the guards are under tension when mounted.

12. A crop collection apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the elongate members include mounting orifices with countersunk portions.
13. A crop collection apparatus according to claim 9, wherein the elongate members comprise polyethylene.
14. A crop collection apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the elongate members comprise an ultraviolet resistant material.
15. A crop collection apparatus according to claim 13, wherein the elongate members comprise ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene.
16. A crop collection apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the elongate members includes a plurality of mounting orifices.
17. A method for accessing a crop collection reel, the reel having at least one guard mounted at a first end and a second end in a flexed condition arcing around a portion of the reel under tension, the method comprising the steps of:

detaching only the first end of the guard and releasing the first end of the guard, wherein the guard returns to a straight configuration upon release of the first end, pulling the guard from around the axle and extending outward from the attached second end.

18. A crop collecting reel for mounting to a crop collection apparatus, the reel comprising:

an arbor;

a plurality of tines, including tine sets having tines spaced apart radially around the arbor, wherein the tine sets are axially spaced along the arbor;

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a housing comprising a plurality of substantially straight elongate guards intermediate adjacent tine sets, wherein the guards are configured for mounting to the crop collection apparatus in an arcing configuration.

